

## IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-21 (Canceled).

- 22 (Currently Amended). An apparatus comprising:
- a substrate;
  - a barrier layer over said substrate;
  - a trench etched into said substrate through said barrier layer;
  - a dielectric in said trench, said dielectric having a first etch rate; and
  - a plurality of ions implanted into said dielectric ~~layer~~ and said barrier layer, said substrate being substantially free of said ions, said implanted dielectric having an a higher etch rate higher than the unimplanted dielectric said first etch rate.
- 23 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 22 wherein the dielectric comprises silicon oxide.
- 24 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 22 wherein said dielectric is damaged by said implanted ions.
- 25 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 22 wherein said barrier layer is formed of silicon nitride.
- 26 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 22 wherein said ions are selected from the group consisting of silicon, carbon, nitrogen, and oxygen.
- 27 (Previously Presented). The apparatus of claim 22 wherein the upper surface of said barrier layer and said dielectric are coplanar.